



Salesian College,  
Battersea,  
London, SW11 3PB

20th June, 1975

Dear Confrères,

This house, and indeed the whole Oxford Province, has suffered a severe loss by the sudden death, on the night of Saturday, May 3rd 1975, of

FATHER JAMES FOLEY, S.D.B.,

who had been Headmaster of the college since 1965. The deceased priest was with a small group of Old Boys and their friends at a social gathering in the school hall when, as a result of a massive heart attack, he collapsed and died. May he rest in peace! Absolution was quickly given, and an ambulance took him to hospital, but he was declared dead on arrival. A Servite priest administered the Last Anointing.

In order to appreciate the severity of our loss, one must realise that Father Foley was not only an excellent priest and a very devoted Son of Don Bosco, but was, too, a man of great intellectual and administrative ability with a grasp of matters educational - from both the theoretical and practical standpoints - whose value in these critical days for education in this country was truly incomparable. This school was, at the time of his death, in the midst of delicate negotiations in relation to which his experience and advice would have been most valuable. From Heaven may the gap be filled with his prayers.

James Foley was born in Ballylongford, County Kerry, Ireland on 27th February, 1916 and, in accordance with good Irish custom, was baptised on the following day. He joined the Salesian Society as a novice at Cowley (Oxford) in 1935, and it was there that he made his first profession. He made his final vows at Bolton in 1942. On the conclusion of his philosophy at Cowley in 1938, he was transferred to Bolton (Lancs.) for his practical triennium, and soon gave evidence of a real Salesian teaching vocation. In 1942, he returned to Cowley to commence his theology and, in 1943, moved on to the House of Studies at Blaisdon (Glos.) to complete the course. At Blaisdon, on 14th July, 1946, he was raised to the Sacred Priesthood.

Once more, it was back to Cowley and, for the next seven years, he taught history in the college there. During this period also he pursued his degree course at Oxford University, emerging with an M.A. degree in Modern History.

The year 1953 saw the beginning of one of the most fruitful eras of his life. He was appointed Headmaster of our college at Farnborough (Hants). Amid many difficulties, and with inferior buildings, the school there had achieved much, but had always been sadly handicapped. In the twelve years from 1953-65, Father Foley responded to the help given by the Superiors in splendid new buildings and qualified staff, by raising the school to new heights and securing for it a reputation second to none.

In 1965, the Headmastership of Battersea fell vacant, and he was asked to take over this important post. He was very reluctant to leave Farnborough, to which he was so warmly attached, but new opportunities at Battersea presented a challenge to him which he did not refuse to accept. Here again, where he remained until his death, his grasp of modern educational developments and his outstanding ability were manifest. The college made real progress and was on the verge of a new era when he died. For all he did here and elsewhere, we recognise our indebtedness in the province to him, and we thank God for the blessings we owe Him.

Father Foley's Requiem Mass and funeral bore eloquent testimony to the esteem and love with which he was regarded everywhere. Over eighty priests, Salesians and others, concelebrated. By a happy chance, Bishop Rada, S.D.B. was at Battersea at the time. He presided at the Mass and gave the absolutions. Father was buried in the Salesian plot at Morden (Surrey).

We ask your prayers for the happy repose of his soul, and commend this house also to your fraternal intercession.

Yours sincerely in Don Bosco,

Francis Treanor, S.D.B.

Rector.

*Details for the Necrology:* Father James Foley, S.D.B., born Ballylongford, Co. Kerry, (Republic of Ireland) 27th February, 1916. Died Battersea (London), 3rd May 1975. Aged 59 years, in the 39th year of his religious profession and the 29th of his priesthood. R.I.P.